

CITY OF COVINGTON
Planning Commission Minutes

February 2, 2012

City Hall Council Chambers

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Key called the regular meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 6:37 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Chair Daniel Key, Vice Chair Paul Max, Sonia Foss, Ed Holmes, Bill Judd and Alex White (late arrival).

MEMBERS ABSENT – Sean Smith

STAFF PRESENT

Richard Hart, Planning Manager
Salina Lyons, Senior Planner
Ann Mueller, Senior Planner
Kelly Thompson, Planning Commission Secretary

APPROVAL OF/CONSENT AGENDA

- Commissioner Judd*
Vice Chair
- 1. ~~Vice Chair~~ moved and Commissioner Max seconded to approve the consent agenda and the minutes for December 15, 2011. Motion carried 5-0.

CITIZEN COMMENTS – NONE

PUBLIC HEARING – NONE

UNFINISHED BUSINESS - NONE

NEW BUSINESS

2. Discussion of Multiple Family Tax Exemption Proposal Requested by City Council

Senior Planner, Ann Mueller introduced a memo providing an overview of a proposed Multifamily Tax Exemption Ordinance requested by the City Council.

The exemption would allow developers to apply for a property tax exemption 8 or 12 years when building multifamily housing. The tax exemption only applies to the improvement of the residential portion of a structure and would not include retail, office or other portions of a mixed use structure, nor would it include the land. According to state law, the structure must have a minimum of 4 dwelling

units. The tax exemption must be applied for prior to building permit issuance. The developer would have 3 years to complete the building (not including extensions).

Commissioner Holmes requested clarification on the 8 or 12 year exemption. Ms. Mueller explained that in order to qualify for the 12 year exemption, the structure must contain a minimum of 20% affordable housing.

The property must also reside within specific areas within the City. In the Town Center (TC) zone, staff recommends that the structure is a mixed use, multi-story building to receive the exemption. To encourage diversity of unit types, there must be varied size units. In the Mixed Housing Office (MHO) zone, the structure must also include diversity of unit types. The R-18 zone would be the best area to encourage affordable housing.

The property tax exemption would not necessarily benefit developer to build a condo. Logistically, it could become very challenging to provide the exemption for a condo due to changing eligibility of the individual owner. There is currently not a demand for condos in the City. In the past 14 years, there have not been any proposals for an owner-occupied condo within the City. One incentive for a condo developer is that the units are more marketable if the buyer was allowed the property tax exemption.

Commissioner Foss asked what neighboring cities are doing. Ms. Mueller responded that the City of Kent has an ordinance. Mr. Hart is not aware of any projects in neighboring cities that have actually received the exemption, which may be due to the depressed market.

The Commission reached a consensus that the cost benefit to implement the exemption to condos is not there at this time, but agreed that it could be revisited at a later date.

With regard to affordability requirements, the Commission may recommend a higher percentage of affordable units. The minimum number of units in the proposed ordinance is 20% to receive the 12 year exemption. The option of affordability requirements could be applied across the 3 target zones.

Commissioner Foss noted that the property in the TC zone is going to cost more per square foot than in other zones. Chair Key offered that the affordability requirement could be applied across all zones.

Ms. Mueller noted that the diversity of unit types in the MHO zone is unique to this proposed ordinance. Mr. Hart noted that the MHO zone already has several encumbrances including critical areas, flood plains and shorelines.

Noticing will be submitted next week for the public hearing before the City Council in late February.

3. Discussion of Wireless Communications Facilities

Ms. Mueller explained the existing code is out of date and references old King County codes. We do not get many requests for new wireless communication facilities. Ms. Mueller explained the different components associated with wireless facilities. She went on to explain the proposal is for repealing the existing code and adopting new code with current, more easy to understand language.

Current code does not allow wireless facilities in the Mineral (M) zone. The new proposed code changes this provision to allow them in the M zone. Ms. Mueller explained that the applicant would be required to demonstrate that they are proposing the facility with the lowest height possible. No towers would be allowed in the TC zone, however, they could be attached to a building in that zone. There are exemptions that allow for towers where a need has been demonstrated.

Commissioner Foss asked for clarification about the setback requirements. Ms. Lyons explained the current setback requirements. Staff indicated the Commission will hold a public hearing on the proposed wireless code changes on March 1, 2012.

The record is noted show that Alex White arrived at 7:50 pm.

ATTENDANCE VOTE

- **Commissioner Foss moved, Commissioner Max seconded to excuse Commissioner Smith's absence. Motion carried 6-0.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

Arts Commissioner, Jonathan Combs, 18430 SE 279th Place. The Arts Commission is motivated to explore funding for public art. There is currently no public art in Covington.

Ms. Lyons responded that there is a city resolution supporting public art, but there is not a formal code requirement. There is a residential density incentive where a developer who wants to maximize density would pay 1% of the total project cost. The Commission indicated they would be happy to support the incorporation of public art in any future discussions with the Council and Arts Commission where appropriate.

COMMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS FROM STAFF


4. Ms. Lyons briefly summarized the Hearing Examiner Report provided by John Galt.

Mr. Hart reviewed the Planning Commission calendar over the next 4 months. He also informed the Planning Commission of a Land Use Training Boot Camp being sponsored by the Planning Association of Washington with Washington Cities Insurance Authority (WCIA) on February 29, 2012. He invited any interested Planning Commissioners to contact him if they would like to attend.

ADJOURN

The February 2, 2012 Planning Commission Meeting adjourned 8:16 at p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kelly Thompson, Planning Commission Secretary